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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

E54

ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	PERC-00	PDI-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VCI-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00
	ISN-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00
	P-00	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	FA-00	SWCI-00	/001W		
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6730

INFO AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 003173

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

DEPT PASS TO USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2031

TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, VE

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONDEMN BRV'S RECORD
ON FREE PRESS

REF: A. CARACAS 2005

B. CARACAS 2877

C. CARACAS 2272

D. CARACAS 1544

E. 04 CARACAS 3365

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(b).

1. (U) SUMMARY. The Inter American Press Association sharply criticized Venezuela's track record on press freedom during its 62nd General Assembly, convened September 29 in Mexico City. Separately, on October 12, the Office of the OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights presented its quarterly report for the period of July 1 to September 30,

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which also highlighted significant Venezuelan deficiencies on the issue. The BRV reacted quickly and dismissively to the criticism. The two international organizations' harsh assessment of Venezuela's record underscores the increasing repression of freedom of expression in Venezuela. END SUMMARY

IAPA

2. (U) The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) convened its 62nd General Assembly in Mexico City, September 29 - October 3. Its final report highlighted many of the gross violations of freedom of expression in Venezuela reported reflets, including the murders of three journalists, Jorge Aguirre (April), Jose Joaquin Tovar (June) (ref a), and Jesus Flores Rojas (August) (ref b). The IAPA criticized the BRV's systematic violation of citizens' right to free expression without harassment because of opinions, and the right to receive information and circulate it in any medium, rights protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Venezuelan Constitution. IAPA assessed that the BRV's repressive tendencies are designed "to establish uniformity in the messages and news to impose the regime's ideology and opinions."

3. (U) The BRV anticipated IAPA's harsh critique. Minister of Communication and Information Willian Lara said on September 28 that he planned to reject the negative criticisms certain to emanate from the IAPA General Assembly that began one day later. Lara charged IAPA is not a conclave of journalists, but of "capitalists of the press." Lara condemned the choice of Venezuelan Press Bloc lawyer and former Interior Minister and Inter-American Court of Human Rights judge Asdrubal Aguiar as Venezuela's representative at the General Assembly and said the presence of a U.S. representative at the assembly is clear evidence of the ideological character of the meeting.

4. (U) The BRV has locked horns with IAPA before. IAPA sent a delegation to Venezuela July 17-29, to investigate multiple reports of crackdowns on the media. Requests to meet with government officials were answered with insults. At that time, IAPA held a press conference in Venezuela, announcing that the BRV was implementing a national strategy to limit freedoms of press and expression (ref c).

OAS

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5. (U) The Office of the OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights presented October 12 its quarterly report on the situation of freedom of expression in the region, covering the period from July 1 to September 30, 2006. The Special Rapporteur condemned the murder of Flores, and also expressed concern over the reopening of the criminal process against journalist Napoleon Bravo for the crime of contempt. The report also highlighted the ongoing threats of demolition and eviction to opposition newspaper "Correo del Caroni" in Bolivar state (ref d). The OAS report did present one positive, applauding the Judicial Branch's partial cancellation of the censorship imposed on the publication of information related to the murder of prosecutor Danilo Anderson in 2004.

6. (U) Special Rapporteur Ignacio Alvarez is Venezuelan and has served in this capacity since April 2006. An interview with Alvarez ran in major independent daily "El Universal" on October 16. Alvarez criticized two pieces of legislation signaling a regression in the protection of freedom of expression: the reform to the Penal Code to increase penalties for contempt and the Content Law (ref e), which contributes to an environment of self-censorship. Alvarez also expressed dismay at the glacial pace of BRV investigations of violence against journalists.

COMMENT

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